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ABSTRACT

An approach to teaching the Holocaust is described in this report, based on the curriculum of an introductory class on the Holocaust offered at Los Angeles Valley College. First, the purposes of the course are outlined, e.g., to analyze the meaning and implications of the Holocaust, to examine responses from different perspectives, and to evaluate the potential for it to happen again. Next, the course objectives are presented including the development of an awareness of the nature of prejudice, an understanding of the motives of the perpetrators, and a perception of its results for Jewish communities and in terms of later political developments. Following a presentation of the course methods, which consisted of an analysis of the historical evidence, group discussions, and written evaluations, observations on the emphases and approaches which may be taken to teaching the Holocaust are provided. Next, the course outline identifies topics covered, including a definition of the subject; understanding anti-Semitism; and responses to the Holocaust from biblical, rabbinic, mystical, traditionalist, humanist, hassidic, literary, Christian, American Jewish, and Israeli perspectives. Finally, information is provided on written assignments for the course, which included a book review, novel, biography, article review, journal, role playing/problem solving, or a synthesizing project. (HB)

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TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST AT A TWO-YEAR PUBLIC COLLEGE

Zev Garber
Los Angeles Valley College

Presented at the Spring American Academy of Religion
Western Regional, Cal State University, Fullerton.
April 7, 1983

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UC 830 218

Paper presented at the Spring American Academy of Religion (AAR) Western Regional, Cal State University, Fullerton, April 7, 1983

Teaching the Holocaust at a Two-Year Public College

Zev Garber, Los Angeles Valley College

The experience of the Holocaust is truly unique. Nothing can compare to the enactment of absolute evil that plagued the Jewish people and other surplus minorities during the 1930's and 1940's. Some say that all speaking about the Holocaust and its consequences is thoroughly inadequate and sacrilegious to the millions of victims. Others say that silence is ultimately a posthumous victory to Hitlerism. This paper will probe a number of responses to Judaism's perpetual dilemma and tragedy taught at a two-year public college.

The main thrust of the paper is to provide some direction for possible standards in an introductory (i.e., lower division) class in Holocaust studies. The paper utilizes the curriculum of the first and only Holocaust course taught at a public community college in California for its case study. Among the topics to be discussed are background, methodology, course content, bibliography, audio-visual resources, simulations and games, and limitations. The paper will suggest that some of the characteristics of a student-oriented two-year college class in Holocaust studies, including teaching innovations which perceive the material it teaches from a student's point of view and attempts to make the learning experience of the students personally meaningful, can be successfully adopted by the four-year college or university professor to his credit, advantage, and profit.

Zev Garber

Responses to the Holocaust

I. Purpose:

A. To study the background, meaning, and practice of anti-Semitism

B. To learn about, and analyze, the assault against the Jewish people waged by Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945.

C. To consider, in their various implications, the results of the Holocaust in Europe and the rest of the world.

D. To examine how the Holocaust differs from other examples of man's inhumanity to man.

E. To evaluate responses to the Holocaust from the following perspectives: Biblical, rabbinical, existentialist, literary, secular, Christian, etc.

F. Using the materials presented and discussed in this course, students will consider whether a Holocaust can happen again.

II. Objectives:

A. To develop an awareness and understanding of racial and religious prejudice in the minds of our student body.

B. To clarify the unique nature nature of the Holocaust and its significance for Jews and non-Jews alike.

C. To highlight the problems of Jewish-Christian relations and seek a better understanding of this problem.

D. To attempt to develop some insight into the motives and purposes of those responsible for the Holocaust.

E. To analyze the attitudes of the leaders of the democratic nations before, during, and after the event

F. To consider the results of the Holocaust upon the Jewish communities in Europe and the rest of the world.

G. To study the relationship, if any, between the Holocaust and the attitude of world Jewry to Zionism and the concept of a Jewish state

H. To study the Holocaust as background for the UN decision to support the reestablishment of a Jewish state.

I. To study the Holocaust as a factor in the national awakening of Soviet, Arab, and Ethiopian Jewry and as a force in the support of Israel by the Jewish people of the world.

J. To understand that the Holocaust and its aftermath represents a vast reservoir of feelings, thoughts, values,concerns, and actions preserved by victims and survivors in artifacts, signs, symbols,calendars, legal traditions, nature, history, persons, documents, and ideas.

K. To feel the personal and the group, the parochial and the universal, the legal and the mystic, the spiritual and secular dimensions of the Holocaust.

L. To discover the change and development of Jewish religious experiences and theology due to the Holocaust.

M. To develop a self-awareness in the relevancy and legitimacy of Holocaust studies.

N. To acquire the basic vocabulary for study of, and oral and written presentations in, a basic introduction to Holocaust studies.

O. To be made aware of the laborious work involved in a critical, disciplined study of origins, sources, and materials, and to obtain skills in oral and written presentations on a given problem in Holocaust studies.

P. To enhance for the identifying Jewish student a self-concept and self-pride in the relevancy of Reb Dodye Feig's last charge in Spring, 1944 to his grandson, Elie Wiesel: "You are Jewish, your task is to remain Jewish"; to develop empathy in others to appreciate the way of life, thought, and faith of the Jewish people as a vital, dynamic force in world culture.

III. Method:

Analysis of historical experience; literature, newspapers, TV programs, movies; linguistic and rhetorical evidence; group discussions of this material and dilemmas involving choice and written evaluation of quality and extent of thinking and reasoning demonstrated.

IV. Observations

A. The subject of the Holocaust with its universal qualities of human nature is unusually broad. Can it encompassed as a unit within a course or even covered within one course alone?

B. The effort would be not to cover <u>all</u> the history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, theology, etc., related to the Holocaust.Rather, the introductory course would provide a context for asking questions and providing a frame of reference through which insights would be provided and further applications

would be suggested.

C. The emphasis should be on tolerance, diversity, and understanding. It is important that an initial class in Holocaust (1) represents a universal, humanistic approach, (2) focuses on the student rather than the event, utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, and (3) endeavors to heighten the student's awareness of ethical themes and human tendencies toward prejudice.

D. There are, of course, many examples of history's excesses being repeated and exceeded. However, there is also progress. We have changed. The United States of 1983 is significantly improved in many ways from the United States of 1953. The same can be said of Germany of January 1933 and West Germany today. There is "improvability" for mankind. Educators, above all others, must believe in that. Exposure to these concepts is essential. Students need to be reminded. All of us need to be reminded.

E. The essence of Holocaust thinking is "dislike of the unlike." It is the recognition of this force in our own lives that must be at the core of any Holocaust presentation. Also at the core must be the students' feelings and recognition of how this distrust of the unfamiliar often dominates our lives.

F. The message of Holocaust for the generation after and for future generations is not survival alone. There is something more important than survival, and that is moral bankruptcy. When Auschwitz (survival at any price) contends with Sinai (a moral standard) then Sinai must prevail. Nazi Germany is an example of what can happen when Auschwitz prevails.

G. A number of college, university, and seminary programs may lack the mechanism (staff, funding, sources, etc.) to offer a class in Holocaust studies, or the subject matter may be limited in appeal. If so, then themes from the Holocaust my be generalized with a title such as "Studies in Human Values," "Civil Liberties,"etc., or a one-day seminar can be given on "Moral Choice," etc. This should not be seen as <u>the</u> Holocaust course or symposium but should utilize the Holocaust experience and other comparable experiences as part of its context. The approach should be universal and interdisciplinary, and other examples of human "holocausts" should be included (American Indians, Armenians, etc.).

H. Los Angeles Valley College, to my knowledge, is the only public community college which offers a class on the Holocaust on a continual basis. The method used is a "response" approach which the presenter-author pioneered and finds far more effective than a lecture approach (see attached syllabus). There should be readings but not "difficult" ones, so that the students' feelings and, thus, interest should be engaged. The aim should be the transformation of values. An understanding approach would be very helpful.

Humanistic concern, a nondogmatic approach, sensitivities, dialogue between teacher and student in and outside of class are some of the factors which can help weave a thread of continuity into material so complex and diversified, and make the experience of the Holocaust more particular and personal.

Zev Garber

Holocaust : A Prototype of Genocide
Jewish Studies 27
Professor Zev Garber

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Responses to the Holocaust

The experience of the Holocaust is truly unique. Nothing can compare to the enactment of absolute evil that plagued the Jewish people and other surplus minorities during the 1930's and 1940's. Some say that all speaking about the Holocaust and its consequences is thoroughly inadequate and sacrilegious to the millions of victims. Others say that silence is ultimately a posthumous victory to Hitlerism. The course will probe a number of responses to Judaism's perpetual dilemma and tragedy.

* Defining the Subject

Is the Shoah different only in degree, not in kind, from previous and contemporary acts of man's inhumanity to man?

* Understanding Anti-Semitism and the Nature of Prejudice

The paradox of anti-Semitism, yesterday and today and forever is the dislike of the unlike.

/Reading: "Understanding Anti-Semitism," by Leon Wieseltier (New Republic, October 1981)
"What is Anti-Semitism?," by Ben Halpern (Modern Judaism, December 1981)
"Anti-Semitism, American Jews, and Israel," by Zev Garber (The Jewish Spectator, Spring 1983)
Review of Lucy Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews 1933-1945, by Zev Garber (CCAR Journal, Winter, 1978)

* The Biblical Response

The structure and the dimensions of the Bible have much to say about human suffering. What can Creation, Akedah,"The Hidden Face," Test of Job, Valley of the Bones, Sinai and other biblical selections tell us about the Silence of Auschwitz?

* The Rabbinic Response

The Rabbis endured the churban of the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E. and the churban of the abortive revolution of Bar-Kochba in 135 C.E. How does the classical Rabbinic mind respond to the Holocaust?

* The Mystical Response

In every generation there have been those who contemplated the problem of evil in a context which, while not obliterating its reality, diminished its power by virtue of a cosmic or mythic perspective. What is a Kabbalistic response to the Shoah?

/ Reading: Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed, Part III, Chapter 51 (translation of S. Pines, University of Chicago Press, 1963)
"Life in the World to Come," a note on Maimonides' Thirteenth Principle by Hoter ben Shelomo, a 15th century Yemenite scholar/

* The Traditionalist Response

Many notable rabbis endured the concentration camps. Leo Baeck commenced his study of This People Israel in Theresienstadt. Ignaz Maybaum contemplated the Face of G-d After Auschwitz. Emil Fackenheim reaffirmed G-d's Presence in History. Eliezer Berkovits responded with Faith After the Holocaust. What is the quality of faith and Halachah in response to the Holocaust?

/ Reading: "The Commanding Voice of Auschwitz," by Emil Fackenheim (G-d's Presence in History, Harper Torchbooks, 1972)
Emil Fackenheim, The Jewish Return Into History, Schocken Books, 1978
Eliezer Berkovits, Faith After the Holocaust, Ktav, 1973
Irving J. Rosenbaum, The Holocaust and Halakhah, Ktav, 1976

*The Humanist Response

For the religious theist, responding to the Holocaust is intolerable. How could the Guardian of Israel have failed to intervene? For the religious humanist, responding is no less agonizing. How could Man have done it? What are the responses of Jewish humanists, e.g., Martin Buber, Mordechai Kaplan, Richard Rubenstein and others, to the Shoah?

/ Reading: "The Symbols of Judaism and the Death of G-d," and"Death of G-d Theology and Judaism," by Richard Rubenstein (After Auschwitz, The Bobbs-Merrill Co.,1966)

* The Hassidic Response

Hutzpah and Ahavat Yisrael — courage bordering on the reckless and love of the Jewish people — are characteristics of the tales about R. Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev. How does Hassidic optimism prevail against impossible odds?

/ Reading: Yaffa Eliach, Hassidic Tales of the Holocaust, Oxford University Press, 1982/

* The Literary Response

The literary imagination does not merely deal with the Holocaust as Historie: controlled, objective facts of historiography. Rather it sees the Holocaust as Geschichte: a paradigm, above the historical; attached to history but by no means limited by it. What are some of the responses of the creative artist to "show what cannot be shown, to explain what is not to be explained, to recapture an experience that cannot be relived" (Elie Wiesel).

/ Reading: Elie Wiesel, Night, Bantam Books, 1982
Elie Wiesel, Dawn, Bantam Books, 1982
"The Holocaust in Literature," by Zev Garber (Religious Education,March-April 19
Jerzy Kosinski, The Painted Bird, Bantam Books, 1981
Andre Schwarz-Bart, The Last of the Just, Bantam Books, 1973 /

* The Christian Response

Whether or not we take the extreme view that there is a direct casual link between two thousand years of the teaching of contempt and the Shoah ("The attitude of skepticism by the Jews regarding the person Jesus and their reluctancy to accept him as Lord and Savior, coupled with the victories that nascent Christianity made in the pagan world, flamed the fires of intolerance against the Jews and sowed the hideous weeds of Western anti-Semitism which extend from Golgotha to Auschwitz and after" -- Zev Garber in "The Synoptic Jesus," Davka, March-April 1972), Christian culpability for the Holocaust cannot be denied. What then is the Christian response (guilt and repentance) to the Shoah?

/Reading: "The Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Responses," by Alice L. Eckardt (JAAR,1974)
Franklyn Littel, The Crucifiction of the Jews: The Failure of Christians to Understand the Jewish Experience, Harper and Row, 1975
"The Challenge of the Holocaust," by John M. Oesterreicher (America, June 11,1977
"Christian Responses to the Endlosung," by A. Roy Eckardt (Religion in Life , Spring 1978)
"In Consideration of Christian Yom Hashoah Liturgies," by Alice L. Eckardt (Shoah 1, 1979)
"Probing the Christian-Jewish Reality," by Paul M. Van Buren (The Christian Century, June 17-24, 1981
A.J. Peck, editor, Jews and Christians After the Holocaust, Fortress Press,1982 /

* American Jewish Response

How effective was the American Jewish response to the Holocaust? Why has a prestigious Holocaust fact finding group, made up of prominent Jews and headed by former Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldburg, "split up in anger and dissension "(New York Times, week of January 2nd 1983) while investigating the American Jewish community's response to the Nazi extermination program.

/ Reading: Walter Laquer, The Terrible Secret, Penguin Books, 1980 /

* A Dialogue Response

For centuries the Jewish community in Poland prospered, but memories of the Holocaust have tainted the relationship, especially in the United States. Can looking at the past honestly begin the healing? Or must it be resolved that anti-Jewish prejudice is very strong among Poles in and outside of Poland, the land of Auschwitz?

/ Reading: "Polish Jewry and Socialist Renewal," by Sid Resnick (Jewish Currents, December 1981
"Jews and Poles: A Relationship Reconsidered," by Ronald Modras (America, January, 1982 /

* An Israeli Response

Never since 1948 has one campaign and one massacre — the summer of 1982 Peace for Galilee Operation and the Phlangist murder of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila on the eve of Rosh HaShannah 5743 — caused so many in and outside of Israel to raise the question of Israeliness and Jewishness, Israeli state and Jewish state, we are one versus we are many, and suggt that "Judaism does not need a political entity in the Land of Israel to survive worldwide. A State of Israel that can conspire with Phlangist thugs is not a proper response to the Holocaust. And we are not one people if that means condoning blatantly immoral Israeli acts" — Eugene B. Borowitz writing in Sh'ma, 10/5/82.

/Reading: Jacobo Timmerman, The Longest War: Israel in Lebanon, Knopf, 1982
Kahan Commission Report, The Jerusalem Post,2/9/83 /

* Can It Happen Again ?

The question of whether or not "It" could happen again depends for an answer upon our model of an "I and Thou" society. The major traits of Hitlerism — conversion, expulsion, slavery and extermination — are not the will of Heaven but the act of Everyman, the bitter fruits of the freedom he has abused. Consequently, man can stamp out these evils if he so chooses by demonstrating intelligence, wisdom, and moral will. This then is the commandment after Auschwitz: All are made in the image of G-d, and the interdependence of humankind is the only rational road to survival.

/ Reading:Simon Wisenthal, The Sunflower, Schocken, 1977
Richard L. Rubenstein, The Cunning of History, Harper and Row, 1978
"Religious Values After the Holocaust: A Jewish View," by Irving Greenberg (A.J. Peck, Jews and Christians After the Holocaust, 1982)
"Auschwitz: The Real Problem," by Zev Garber (unpublished paper, 1979)
"Amalek: A Rabbinic Paradigm of Evil," paper given by Zev Garber at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, December 1981 /

S H A L O M

The Written Assignment

Of the many aspects of the learning process, perhaps the most frustrating is the cross purpose of students and professors. The professor's lectures are for the most part not understood, and his intelligence is further insulted by the students' seeming anti-intellectualism. The professor blames his failure on his young charges. He vents his disatisfaction by popping quizzes, assigning busy work, asking trick questions on exams, and springing a host of other tricks which only his/her mind can issue. Students become apathetic, turn off, and consider class attendance a punishing jail sentence.

In reality, the problem grows out of the diversified roles played by the professor and the student. The professor sees him/herself as a knowledge dispenser, developing a new generation of scholars who share his/her philosophy and concerns, and are willing to spend infinite hours reading, researching, writing, and discussing the problems at hand. The average student does not have the scholarly way as defined by the professor. He is a tradesman interested only in the bare essentials of the job:how, when, where, what is required of him/her to obtain his/her grade. S/he could care less about schools of thought, philosophy, sociology, history, literary analysis, and theoretical abstractions; s/he is interested only in the here and now.

The nature of a college program, introductory classes in particular, is such that a professor does not trust his/her student and a student does not trust his/her professor. Students are regimented through a structured program which gives them little time to reflect,think, and mature.No wonder passivity and inertia set in.To rectify this problem the professor could help his student understand the beauty of being a professional and not a mere worker. One of the ways in which this can be done is to change the nature of the written assignment. In place of hourly examinations, mid-terms, and finals, which often represent the scribbled jottings derived from a lecture hour, there can be the book review, article review, journal, and synthesizing project. The major pedagogical principle gained is that the students will learn better and appreciate more their understanding of the subject matter if they are actively involved in learning rather than being passively taught.

Book Review

There are two types of book review, "scholarly" and "popular."

A. Scholarly Text

The review is brief and direct. About six double-spaced typewritten sheets in proper length. An essay style and not a question-and-answer format is suggested. The structure of the paper is constructed from the viewpoint of writing college quality work, using Kate L. Turabin's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers or the MLA Style Sheet.

The goal of the report that the student writes is to demonstrate to the professor that s/he has read the book, has understood why it was written, and has related it consciously to the material presented in the lectures. In addition to writing on the main thesis of the book, the student discusses language and terminology used, the background presupposed in the reader,whether the material is presented in a predominently explanatory or a predominently argumentative form, etc. S/he is asked, finally, to discuss how the book affected his/her previous notions of the particular aspect or aspects of Holocaust with which it deals.

B. Novel and Biography

An interesting way for a student to learn about Holocaust ideas, values, and history is through fiction and/or biography which shift the course curriculum from subject matter to activity, from subjects of study to experience.The reading of Holocaust novels and biographies is a Holocaust happening and is more popular than Holocaust historical reading in fashioning meaningful, lasting ties to an awareness of Holocaust in Jewish and world history and culture. A good story provides a more vivid and intimate insight into life than does a textbook. A textbook must generalize but a story makes the subject matter more particular and personal. In addition, the novelist and/or biographer give a different dimension to what Holocaust and Final Solution mean than is found in the "heavy" findings of an anthropologist, theologian, historian,social scientist, etc.

An impressionistic essay is suitable for a novel or biography review. By "impressionistic' is meant: students' reactions, feelings about the book, how s/he experienced the book, any

questions it may have raised in his/her mind to the central themes of the course, etc. Or the student may approach the review by extracting from the book significant facts or observations related to aspects of Holocaust which the book purports to cover. Some of the points to look for are: what can we learn from the author's life?; is his/her style distinctive?; age and type of Jew portrayed; historical background and implications of the story; changes in the religious life of the Jew caused by knowledge of the Final Solution; growing knowledge about the Holocaust and Jewish destiny in Europe, Israel, America, etc.; the Jewish minority in an overwhelming gentile environment; what message is there for the continuation of Jewish life, etc.

Article Review

An article review is short; approximate length is 2-3 pages. The review should contain (1) author, title of article, reference; (2) summary of main points of article; (3) statement of whether the article is empirical or analytical, or both.

A. If the article is empirical, what hypothesis does the article support? Can the empirical article be related to a more general statement?

B. If the article is analytical, describe the analysis. Does the analysis suggest hypotheses which could be tested? ;

(4) the student's evaluation of the article.

Articles are selected from assigned articles or readings in the course outline or from relevant periodical literature on the subject matter.

Journal

The journal is intended to combine aspects of the formal essay with that of a diary. The entries are short exercises, 5 typewritten double-space pages are recommended, though there is no limitation on length. Thoughts associated with the lecture topics are written-up as a journal entry and turned in during the class session at which the related topic is discussed. Thoughts and activities are many and varied, and provide an opportunity for the student to develop critical methodology and preserve or alter deepseated commitments in his/her view of self, society, and history in light of the Holocaust.

Synthesizing Project

A synthesizing project permits a direct encounter of student with material and can serve as an option or alternative to a writing only presentation. The depth, variety, nature, and breadth of the Holocaust are forcibly brought home if the student pursues his/her own special academic preference (e.g., art, music, religion, psychology, literature, sociology, etc.) in whatever media s/he deems most productive (short story, collage, audio-visual, etc.) in showing the relationship between these disciplines and some aspect of Holocaust studies. If done properly, a synthesizing project can weave a thread of continuity into complex and diversified material, and make the course content more particular and personal. The project is clearly intended not only to synthesize the different motifs within the course, but to provide a goal for the students from the very day it is appropriately introduced.

Role-Playing, Problem Solving

A writing exercise, old in years but recently discovered, designed to enhance a learning process is role-playing or problem solving.This method takes seriously the four sequential steps of learning: confrontation, analysis, interaction, and internalization.

Role-playing or problem solving offers a number of positive claims seldom found by other teaching strategies. It deals with real life situations and not theoretical abstractions; it enables the student to confront deep philosophical ideas in remarkable simplicity and convincing application; more cognitive avenues of knowledge are relied upon by this method than any other; students develop sensitivity and learn empathy when they interpret the different roles, often in conflict one with another, of a problem solving exercise; finally, values, commitments, aspirations, etc., can be lastingly changed or developed or discovered when a student is engaged in ethical decision making and moral development, the twin pillars of a role-playing sequence.

Problem solving activities can be enacted in almost every phase of Holocaust studies, from the Nazi-Jew-Church confrontation in the rise of the Third Reich to the different post-Auschwitz theologies and histories, from learning about the outlook and mentality of European Jewry in the inter-war years to understanding Israelis, 1948-present, and with all responses ever since Sinai to choose life and not death or stagnation.

Zev Garber

(Incorporated in the remarks of Zev Garber on "Teaching the Holocaust at a Two-Year Public College," given at Cal State University, Fullerton on April 7, 1983 before a regional conference of the American Academy of Religion.)

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Responses to the Holocaust
Religious Studies 45
UC Riverside

Written Assignments

1. To what degree and in what way did the lecturer and suggested readings contribute toward, or make more complicated, the definition of "Holocaust."

2. A young Jew is taken from a death-camp to a makeshift army hospital. He is led to the bedside of a Nazi soldier whose head is completely bandaged. The dying Nazi blindly extends his hand toward the Jew, and in a cracked whisper begins to speak. The Jew listens silently while the Nazi confesses to having participated in the burning alive of an entire village of Jews. The soldier, terrified of dying with this burden of guilt, begs absolution from the Jew. Having listened to the Nazi's story for several hours --- torn between horror and compassion for the dying man --- the Jew finally walks out of the room without speaking (from Simon Wisenthal, The Sunflower).

Was his action right? Or moral? How would you respond to this question?

OR

Critically assess L. Eisenberg,"I Still Care for Poland, but Sometimes I Wonder Why," in light of a class observation that the Holocaust is a record of death; but in another sense, studying the record prepares us with a deeper understanding of life.

3. Create a sociodrama (role playing, short story, etc.) entitled "The Last Jew Alive." Present at least five different views of belief in a post-Auschwitz age. Use lecturer's comments and readings as a starting point.

OR

View and analyze two media resources (e.g.,the films:"Night and Fog," "Inside the Third Reich," "Skokie," "The Pawnbroker," or the plays: "The Deputy," "Incident at Vichy," etc) on the destruction of European Jewry.

4. Critically evaluate the essays in A.J. Peck, Jews and Christians After the Holocaust in light of the foreword by Elie Wiesel and Z. Garber,"Auschwitz: The Real Problem."

Suggested length of responses to questions: 2-3 typewritten pages.

Zev Garber

I Still Care for Poland, but Sometimes I Wonder Why

By I. EISENBERG

Each morning, when I pick up my newspaper on the front lawn, the first thing I look for is the news about Poland. Not the economy, not the increasing crime rate, but whether Solidarity leaders are still in jail. Whether martial law has weakened. Whether Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski still rules with an iron hand.

I find myself wanting to read good news about Poland, but there never is any. Certainly, living in this country, having all the freedom in the world, I want the Poles also to be free, to have free trade unions and free elections.

At the same time, I keep hearing a voice in my heart reminding me of 1942 and 1943, when I was marching in Radom under the machine guns of the SS from the Szkolna concentration camp to the Witwurnia munitions plant, or building roads from Witwurnia to the railroad station. I see myself with my fellow Jews, my fellow slave laborers, wearing my blue-and-white-striped uniform with my number on my chest and on my pants, weighing little more than 100 pounds, dragging my feet in a pair of wooden shoes.

I remember the Poles standing on the sidewalks smiling and greeting the SS men and mocking us with names like "Jojha Karabin" (shlemiel with a rifle), ridiculing us in broken Polish, in imitation of the uneducated Jews who spoke mostly Yiddish. I remember searching the crowd for some Poles with tears in their eyes, with compassion for us. I saw none.

Every day for a long time before I was transferred to Auschwitz, I was marched to the Witwurnia plant or to the roadwork on the highway. The crowds were never smaller. They never watched us marching without delight.

Maybe it was because the homes and apartments where the Jews of Radom had lived were now occupied by Poles, and the signs on the storefronts that had been owned by Jews shipped to Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka now carried the names of Poles who "deserved" them (to deserve a home or a store, a woman in the family had to become the girlfriend of a German, or the "lucky" new tenant had to help the Nazis in many ways).

In 1945, after I was liberated in Germany, I returned to Poland—to the city of Lublin, where I had been born, gone to school, played soccer in the streets, gone to the synagogue with my father, had many friends, made snowmen in the winter and splashed in the Bistrzica river in the summer. I found only a few Jews left out of the 40,000 who had been living there in 1939, when Hitler's troops marched in.

And when the 100 or so came back and asked for their homes, their furniture, their clothes (some of which were still in the closets), the answer was: "You'd better get lost. Otherwise we'll see you tonight." We knew what this meant. The Armia-Krajowa (AK) were killing Jews returning from the camps and from the resistance. Hundreds of Jews were killed by AK pogroms in Kielce, Skarzyslko and Radom.

At night we had to lock ourselves in the rooms that we had been lucky to get. We were watched over by armed members of our group who had kept the handguns and rifles that they had used in the underground.

My former neighbors didn't want to talk to me or give me information about members of my family who had been taken to Samelpunkt and transported to death camps. "No, don't know," was always the answer.

The same expression was heard all over Poland: *Patrz ty ich sie zostalo* (Look, so many of them survived).

Is this my country? I asked myself. The country that had served after being mobilized in August, 1939, fighting on the front lines, during the few days of the blitzkrieg? I thought that I knew the Poles from before the war, from the ghetto, from the Polish-based concentration camps. Still, when I returned to Poland, I dreamed that the Poles in my hometown would embrace me and offer me food, lodging and warmth. But not one of these things was offered to me. On the contrary, I was told to "get lost." And I heard many Poles ask with contempt: "Why didn't you Jews fight back? Why did you all go to the slaughter?"

I'm not going to ask the same questions now. Why don't you fight the martial law? Why are you going to the jails and camps without resistance? Why are so many Poles signing loyalty oaths?

I am not asking these questions. I'm asking myself why there in my heart such a feeling for Poland? Why do I care so much for the Poles? Why?

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